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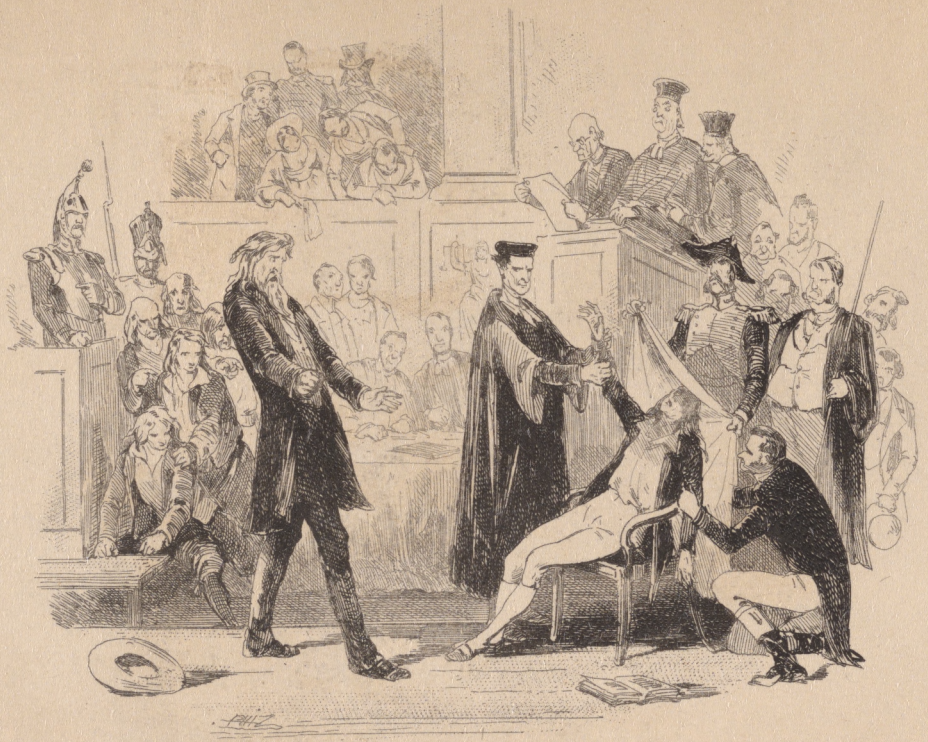
Nap shews Tom the door.



The Witness.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE "PALAIS DE JUSTICE."

"It will go hard with Moreau to-day," said the elder of the two prisoners—a large, swarthy-looking Breton, in the dress of a sailor; "the consul hates him."

"Whom does he not hate?" said the younger—a slight and handsome youth. "Whom does he not hate that ever rivalled him in glory? What love did he bear to Kleber or Dessaix?"

"It is false," said I, fiercely. "Bonaparte's greatness stands far too high to feel such rivalry as theirs—the conqueror of Italy and of Egypt——"

"Is a Corsican," interrupted the elder.

"And a tyrant," rejoined the other, in the same breath.

"These words become you well," said I, bitterly; "would that no stain lay on my honour, and I could make you eat them."

"And who are you that dare to speak thus?" said the younger; "or how came one like you mixed up with men, whose hearts were in a great cause, and who came to sell their lives upon it?"

"I tell you, boy," broke in the elder, in a slow and measured tone, "I have made more stalwart limbs than thine bend, and stronger joints crack, for less than thou hast ventured to tell us; but sorrow and suffering are hard masters, and I can bear more now than I was wont to do.——Let us have no more words."

As he spoke, he leaned his head upon his hand, and turned towards the wall; the other, too, sat down in a corner of the cell, and was silent, and thus we remained for hours long.

The dreary stillness, made more depressing by the presence of the two prisoners, whose deep-drawn breathings were the only sounds they uttered, had something unspeakably sad and melancholy in it, and more than once I felt sorry for the few words I had spoken, and which separated those whose misfortunes should have made them brothers.

A confused and distant hum, swelling and falling at intervals, now filled the air; and gradually I could distinguish the shouts of people at a distance. This increased as it came nearer, and then I heard the tramping noise of many feet, as of a great multitude of people passing in the street below, and suddenly a wild cheer broke forth—"Vive le Consul!" "Vive Bonaparte!" followed the next instant by the clanking sound of a cavalry escort, while the cry grew louder and louder, and the *vivas* drowned all other sounds.

"You hear them, Guillaume, you hear them," said the sailor to the other prisoner. "That shout is our death-cry. Bonaparte comes not here to-day but to see his judges do his bidding."

"What care I?" said the other, fiercely. "The guillotine or the sabre, the axe or the bayonet—it is all one. We knew what must come of it."

The door opened as he spoke, and a greffier of the tribunal appeared with four gendarmes.

"Come, messieurs," said he, "the court is waiting for you."

"And how go matters without, sir?" said the elder, in an easy tone.

"Badly for the prisoners," said the greffier, shaking his head. "Monsieur Moreau, the general's brother, has done much injury—he has insulted the consul."

"Bravely done!" cried the younger man with enthusiasm. "It is well he should hear truth one day, though the tongue that uttered it should be cold the next."

"Move on, sir," said the greffier, sternly. "Not you," added he, as I pressed forward after the rest. "Your time has not come."

"Would that it had," said I, as the door closed upon me, and I was left in total solitude.

The day was over, and the evening already late, when a turnkey appeared, and desired me to follow him. A moody indifference to every thing had settled on me, and I never spoke, as I walked behind him down corridor after corridor, and across a court, into a large massive-looking building, whose grated windows and strongly-barred doors reminded me of the Temple.

"Here is your cell," said he roughly, as he unlocked a low door near the entrance.

"It is gloomy enough," said I, with a sad smile.

"And yet many have shed tears to leave it before now," rejoined he, with a savage twinkle of his small eyes.

I was glad when the hoarse crash of the closed door told me I was alone, and I threw myself upon my bed, and buried my face in my hands.

There is a state which is not sleep, and yet is akin to it, into which grief can bring us—a half dreary stupor, where only sorrows are felt, and even they come dulled and blunted, as if time and years had softened down their sting. But no ray of hope shines there—a dreary waste, without a star; the cold dark sea, boundless and bleak, is not more saddening than does life then seem before us. There is neither path to follow nor goal to reach, and an apathy worse than death creeps over all our faculties; and yet when we awake we wish for this again. Into this state I sank, and when morning came felt sorry that the light should shine into my narrow cell, and rouse me from my stupor. When the turnkey entered to bring me breakfast, I turned towards the wall, and trembled lest he should speak to me; and it was with a strange thrill I heard the door close as he went out. The abandonment to one's sorrow—that daily, hourly indulgence in grief, which the uncheered solitude of a prison begets—soon brings the mind to the narrow range of one or two topics. With the death of hope all fancy and imagination perish—the springs of all speculation

are dried up—and every faculty bent towards one point—the reason, like a limb unexercised, wastes, and pines, and becomes paralyzed.

Now and then the thought would flash across me—what if this were madness, and I shuddered not at the thought: such had my prison made me.

Four days and nights passed over thus—a long, monotonous dream, in which I counted not the time, and I lay upon my straw bed watching the expiring light of the candle with that strange interest one attaches to every thing within the limits of a prison-cell. The flame waned and flickered: now lighting up for a second the cold grey walls, scratched with many a prisoner's name; now subsiding, it threw strange and fitful shapes upon them—figures that seemed to move and beckon to each other—goblin outlines, wild and fanciful; then came a bright flash as the wick fell, and all was dark.

If the dead do but sleep—was the first thought that crossed my mind as the gloom of total night wrapped every object about me, and a stillness most appalling prevailed. Suddenly I heard the sounds of a heavy bolt withdrawn, and a door opening, then a low rushing noise, like wind blowing through a narrow corridor, and at last the marching sounds of feet, and the accents of men speaking together; nearer and nearer they came, and at length halted at the door of my cell. A cold faint feeling—the sickness of the heart—crept over me; the hour—the sounds reminded me of what so often I had heard men speak of in the Temple, and the dread of assassination made me tremble from head to foot. The light streamed from beneath the door, and reached to my bed; and I calculated the number of steps it would take before they approached me. The key grated in the lock, and the door opened slowly, and three men stood at the entrance. I sprang up wildly to my feet—a sudden impulse of self-defence seized me—and with a wild shout for them to come on, I rushed forward; my foot, however, caught the angle of the iron bedstead, and I fell headlong and senseless to the ground. Some interval elapsed; and when next I felt consciousness, I was lying full length on my bed—the cell lit up by two candles on the table, beside which sat two men, their heads bent eagerly over a mass of papers before them. One was an old and venerable-looking man, his white hair and long queue so bespeaking him; he wore a loose cloth cloak that covered his entire figure, but I could see that the brass scabbard of a sword projected beneath it; on the chair beside him, too, there lay a foraging-cap. The other much younger, though still not in youth, was a thin, pale, care-worn man; his forehead was high, and strongly marked; and there was an intensity and determination in his brow and about the angles of his mouth most striking; he was dressed in black, with deep ruffles at his wrist.

"It is quite clear, general," said he, in a low and measured voice, where each word fell with perfect distinctness—"it is quite clear that they can press a conviction here if they will. The allegations are so contrived, as rather to indicate complicity, than actually establish it.

The defence in such cases has to combat shadows, not overturn facts; and believe me, a procureur-général, armed by a police, is a dexterous enemy."

"I have no doubt of it," said the general, rapidly, "but what are the weak points?—where is he most assailable?"

"Every where," said the other. "To begin—the secret information of the outbreak between Lord Whitworth and the consul—the frequent meetings with Count de Beauvais—the false report to the chef de police—the concealment of this abbé—by-the-by, I am not quite clear about that part of the case; why have the prosecution not brought this abbé forward. It is evident they have his evidence, and can produce him, if they will: and I see no other name in the act of accusation than our old acquaintance—Mehée de La Touche——"

"The villain!" cried the general, with a stamp of indignation, while a convulsive spasm seemed to shake every fibre of his frame.

"Mehée de La Touche!" said I to myself. "I have heard that name before;" and like a lightning-flash it crossed my mind that such was the name of the man Marie de Meudon charged me with knowing.

"But still," said the general, "what can they make of all these? that of indiscretion—folly—breach of discipline, if you will; but——"

"Wait a little," said the other, quietly; "then comes the night of the chateau, in which he is found among the Chouan party in their very den, taking part in the defence."

"No! no! Lamorciere, who commanded the cuirassiers, can establish the fact beyond question—that Burke took no part in the affray, and delivered his sword at once when called on."

"At least they found him there, and on his person the brevet of colonel, signed by monsieur himself."

"Of that I can give no explanation," replied the general; "but I am in possession of such information as can account for his presence at the chateau, and establish his innocence on that point."

"Indeed," cried the advocate, for such he was; "with that much may be done."

"Unhappily, however," rejoined the general, "if such a disclosure is not necessary to save his life, I cannot venture to give it; the ruin of another must follow the explanation."

"Without it he is lost," said the advocate, solemnly.

"And would not accept of life with it," said I boldly, as I started up in my bed, and looked fixedly at them.

The general sprang back astonished and speechless; but the advocate, with more command over his emotions, cast his eyes upon the paper before him, and quickly asked, "And the commission—how do you account for that?"

"It was offered to, and refused by me. He who made the proposal forgot it on my table, and I was about to restore it when I was made prisoner."

"What condition was attached to your acceptance of it?"

"Some vague, indistinct proposals were made to me to join a conspiracy of which I was neither told the object nor intentions. Indeed I stopped any disclosure by rejecting the bribe."

"Who made these same proposals?"

"I shall not tell his name."

"No matter," said the advocate, carelessly: "it was Count de Beauvais;" and then, as if affecting to write, I saw his sharp eyes glance over towards me, while a smile of gratified cunning twitched his lip. "You will have no objection to say how first you became acquainted with him?"

The dexterity of this query, by replying to which I at once established his preceding assumption, completely escaped me, and I gave an account of my first meeting with De Beauvais without ever dreaming of the inferences it led to.

"An unhappy rencontre, sir," said the adovcate, as if musing: "better have finished the intimacy, as you first intended, at the Bois de Boulogne."

"It may be as you say, sir," said I, irritated by the flippancy of his remark; "but, perhaps, I may ask the name of the gentleman who takes such interest in my affairs, and by what right he meddles in them?"

The general started back in his chair, and was about to speak, when the advocate laying his hand gently on his arm to restrain him, and in a voice of the most unruffled smoothness, replied—"As to my name, sir, it is Laurence Baillot; my rank is simple *avocat* of the Cour de Tribunal; and the 'right' by which I interfere in matters personal to you, is the consideration of fifty louis which accompanied this brief."

"And my name, young man, is Lieutenant-general d'Auvergne," said the old man proudly, as he stared me steadfastly in the face. I arose at once, and saluted the general with a deep and respectful obeisance. It was the same officer who reviewed us at the Polytechnique the day of my promotion. "You are now, I hope, satisfied with the reasons of our presence, and that nothing but considerations of your interest can have influenced our visit," said the *avocat* with calmness: "such being the case, sit down here, and relate all you can of your life since your leaving the Polytechnique; be brief too, for it is now three o'clock; the court opens at ten, your case will be called the second, and I must at least have three hours of sleep."

The general pointed to a seat beside him; I sat down, and without any delay proceeded to give a rapid account of all my adventures and proceedings, to the hour we were then assembled, only omitting all mention of Mademoiselle de Meudon's name, and such allusions to Beauvais as might lead to his crimination.

The advocate wrote down, as rapidly as I spoke them, the principal details of my history, and when I had concluded, perused the notes he had taken with a quick eye. "This will never do," said he, with more impatience in his manner than I had yet witnessed; "here are a mass of circumstances all unexplained, and all suspicious. It is now entirely a question of the feeling of the court. The charges if pressed,

must lead to a conviction. Your innocence, sir, may satisfy—indeed it has satisfied General d'Auvergne, who else had not been here this night —but the proofs are not before us." He paused for a moment, and then continued in a lower tone, addressing himself directly to the general, "We must entreat a delay; a day—two days, certainly, will establish the proofs against George and his accomplices; they will be condemned and executed at once. It is most likely that the court will not recur to capital punishment again. The example being made, any further demonstration will be needless. I see you put little faith in this manœuvre; but trust me, I know the temper of the tribunal; besides the political stroke has already succeeded. Bonaparte has conquered all his enemies; his next step will be to profit by the victory." These words were riddles to me at the time, though the day soon came when their meaning was palpable. "Yes, two days will do it," said he, confidently raising his voice as he spoke; "and then whether there be a hussar the more, or one the less in France, will little trouble the current of events."

"Then, how to obtain the time; that is the question," said the general.

"Oh, we shall try something; there can always be a witness to be called; some evidence all essential, not forthcoming; some necessary proof not quite unravelled. What if we summoned this same abbé. The court will make proclamation for him. D'Ervan's the name."

"Yes; but if by so doing he may be involved."

"Fear nothing on that score; he'll never turn up, believe me. We can affect to show that his evidence is all important. Yes, we'll make the Abbé D'Ervan our first witness. Where shall we say he resides? Rouen I suppose will do. Yes, Rouen;" and so, without waiting for reply, he continued to write. "By this, you perceive," he remarked with a look of gratified cunning, "we shall disconcert their plans. They are evidently keeping this abbé up for some greater occasion; they have a case against himself, perhaps, in which the proofs are not yet sufficient for conviction. We'll trouble their game, and they may be glad to compromise with us."

The general looked as much confounded as myself at these schemes of the lawyer, but we both were silent.

A few questions more followed, to which he wrote down my answers as I gave them, and then starting up, he said—"And now, general, I must hasten home to bed. Be ready, at all events, for appearing before the tribunal, Mr. Burke; at ten you will be called, and so good night." He bowed formally to me, as he opened the door to permit the general to pass out first.

"I'll follow you in a moment," said the general, while he closed the door after him, and remained behind with me in the cell. "It was only this evening, sir," said he, in a low voice, "at the return of Madame Bonaparte from Boulogne, that Mademoiselle de Meudon learned you were not at liberty. She has made me acquainted with the circumstances by which your present risk has been incurred, and has put me in possession of wherewithal to establish your innocence as

regards the adventure at the Chateau d'Ancre. This disclosure, if it exculpates *you*, will of course criminate *her*, and among those too, where she has been received and admitted on terms of the closest friendship. The natural desire to save her cousin's life will not cover the act by which so horrible a conspiracy might have escaped punishment. Bonaparte never forgives! Now, I am in possession of this proof, and if you demand it, it shall be in your keeping. I have no hesitation in saying that the other charges against you can easily be got over—this one being refuted. What do you say?"

"Nothing could make me accept of such an exculpation," said I, resolutely; "and were it offered in spite of me, I'll plead guilty to the whole act, and suffer with the rest."

The old man's eyes glistened with pleasure, and I thought I saw a a tear fall on his cheek. "Now," cried he, as he grasped my hand in both his—"now I feel that you are innocent, my brave boy, and come what will, I'll stand by you." With that he hurried from the cell, and followed the advocate, who was already calling with some impatience to have the doors unlocked.

I was again alone. No, not alone—for in my narrow cell hope was with me now.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE "TRIAL."

So doubtful was the government of the day in what way the people of Paris would be disposed to regard the trial of the Chouan prisoners, how far public sympathy might side with misfortune and heroism, and in what way they would regard Moreau, whose career in arms so many had witnessed with pride and enthusiasm, that for several days they did not dare to strike the decisive blow which was to establish their guilt, but advanced with slow and cautious steps, gradually accumulating a mass of small circumstances, on which the *Moniteur* each day commented, and the other journals of less authority expatiated, as if to prepare the public mind for further and more important revelations.

At last, however, the day arrived in which the mine was to be sprung. The secret police—whose information extended to all that went on in every class of the capital, who knew the chit-chat of the highest circles, equally as they did the grumblings of the Faubourg St. Antoine—pronounced the time had come when the fatal stroke might no longer be withheld, and when the long-destined vengeance should descend on their devoted heads.

The want of energy on the part of the prosecution—the absence of important witnesses, and of all direct evidence whatever, which marked the first four days of the trial, had infused a high hope and a strong sense of security into the prisoners' hearts. The proofs which they so much dreaded, and of whose existence they well knew, were not forthcoming against them. The rumoured treachery of some of their party began, at length, to lose its terror for them—while in the lax and careless proceedings of the procureur-général they saw, or fancied they saw, a desire on the part of government to render the public uninterested spectators of the scene, and thus prepare the way for an acquittal, while no danger of any excitement existed.

Such was the state of matters at the close of the fourth day—a tiresome and desultory discussion on some merely legal question had occupied the court for several hours; and many of the spectators, wearied and tired out, had gone home disappointed in their expectations, and secretly resolving not to return the following day.

This was the moment for which the party in power had been waiting—the interval of false security, as it would seem, when all danger was past, and no longer any apprehension existed. The sudden shock of the newly-discovered proofs would then come with peculiar force, while, no matter how rapid any subsequent step might be, all charge of precipitancy or undue haste had been disproved by the tardy nature of the four first days' proceedings.

For the change of scene about to take place an early edition of the *Moniteur* prepared the public; and by day-break the walls of Paris were placarded with great announcements of the discoveries made by the government—how, by their untiring efforts, the whole plot, which was to deluge France with blood, and invert the glorious institutions of freedom they had acquired by the revolution, had been laid open. That new and convincing evidence of the guilt of the Chouans had turned up—and a frightful picture of anarchy and social disorganization was displayed, all of which was to originate in an effort to restore the Bourbons to the throne of France.

While, therefore, the galleries of the court were crowded to suffocation at an early hour, and every avenue leading to the tribunal crammed with people, anxious to be present at this eventful crisis, the prisoners took their places on the "bench of the accused," totally unaware of the reason of the excitement they witnessed, and strangely puzzled to conceive what unknown circumstance had re-invested the proceedings with a new interest.

As I took my place among the rest I stared with surprise at the scene—the strange contrast between the thousands there whose strained eyes and feverish faces betokened the highest degree of excitement, and that little group on which every look was turned—calm, and even cheerful. There sat George Cadoudal in the midst of them, his hands clasped in those at either side of him; his strongly-marked features perfectly at rest, and his eyes bent with a steady stare on the bench where the judges were seated. Moreau was not present, nor did I see some of the Chouans whom I remembered on the former day

The usual formal proclamation of the court being made, silence was called by the crier—a useless precaution, as throughout that vast assembly not a whisper was to be heard. A conversation of some minutes took place between the procureur and the counsel for the prisoners, in which I recognised the voice of Monsieur Baillot my own advocate, which was interrupted by the president, desiring that the proceedings should commence.

The procureur-général bowed, and took his seat, while the president, turning towards George, said—

"George Cadoudal, you have hitherto persisted in a course of blank denial regarding every circumstance of the conspiracy with which you are charged. You have asserted your ignorance of persons and places with which we are provided with proof to show you are well acquainted. You have neither accounted for your presence in suspected situations, nor satisfactorily shown what were the objects of your intimacy with suspected individuals. The court now desires to ask you, whether at this stage of the proceedings you wish to offer more explicit revelations, or explain any of the dubious events of your career?"

"I will answer any question you put to me," replied George, sternly; "but I have lived too long in another country not to have learned some of its usages, and I feel no desire to become my own accuser. Let him there (he pointed to the procureur-général) do his office—he is the paid and salaried assailant of the innocent."

"I call upon the court," said the procureur, rising—when he was suddenly interrupted by the president saying, "We will protect you, monsieur le procureur; and once again we would admonish the accused, that insolence to the authorities of this court is but a sorry plea in vindication of his innocence, and shall be no recommendation to our mercy."

"Your mercy!" said George, in a voice of scorn and sarcasm. "Who ever heard of a tiger's benevolence or a wolf's charity? And even if you wished it, he whose slaves you are——"

"I call upon you to be silent," said an advocate, rising from a bench directly behind him—"another interruption of this kind and I shall abandon the defence."

"What!" said George, turning quickly round and staring at him with a look of withering contempt, "and have they bought *you* over too?"

"Call the first witness," said the president, and an indistinct murmur was heard, and a slight confusion seen to agitate the crowd, as the gendarmes opened a path towards the witness bench; and then I saw two men carrying something between them, which I soon perceived to be a man. The legs, which were alone apparent, hung down listlessly like those of a corpse, and one arm, which fell over the shoulder of the bearer, moved to and fro, as they went, like the limb of a dead man. Every neck was stretched from the galleries above, and along the benches beneath, to catch a glimpse of the mysterious figure, which seemed like an apparition from the grave come to give evidence. His face, too, was concealed by a handkerchief; and as he was placed in a chair provided

for the purpose, the assistants stood at ether side to support his drooping figure.

"Let the witness be sworn," said the president; and with the aid of an officer of the court, a thin white hand was held up, on which the flesh seemed almost transparent from emaciation—a low muttering sound followed, and the president spoke again: "Let the witness be uncovered. George Cadoudal, advance!"

As the hardy Chouan stepped forward the handkerchief fell from the witness's face, while his head slowly turned round towards the prisoner. A cry, like the yell of a wounded animal, broke from the stout Breton, as he bounded into the air and held up both his arms to their full height. "*Toi, toi,*" screamed he, in accents that seemed the very last of a heart wrung to agony, while he leaned forward, and fixed his eyes on him, till the very orbs seemed bursting from their sockets. "*Oui,*" added he, in a lower tone, but one which was felt in every corner of that crowded assemblage—"*Oui, cést lui.*" Then clasping his trembling hands together, as his knees bent beneath him, he turned his eyes upwards, and said—"*Le bon Dieu,* that makes men's hearts and knows their thoughts, deals with us as he will; and I must have sinned sorely towards him when such punishment as this has fallen upon me—oh, my brother, my child, my own Bouvet de Lozier."

"Bouvet de Lozier," cried the other prisoners, with a shout wild as madness itself, while every man sprung forward to look at him. But already the head had fallen back over the chair, the limbs stretched out rigidly, and the arm fell heavily down. "He is dying"—"he is dead"—were the exclamations of the crowd, and a general cry for a doctor was heard around. Several physicians were soon at his side, and by the aid of restoratives he was gradually brought back to animation, but cold and speechless he lay, unable to understand any thing, and was obliged to be conveyed back again to his bed.

It was some time before the excitement of this harrowing scene was over; and when order at length was restored in the court, George Cadoudal was seen seated, as at first, on the bench, while around him his faithful followers were grouped. Like children round a beloved father, some leaned on his neck, others clasped his knees—some covered his hands with kisses, and called him by the most endearing names. But though he moved his head from side to side, and tried to smile upon them, a cold vacancy was in his face, his lips were parted, and his eyes stared wildly before him, his very hair stood out from his forehead, on which the big drops of sweat were seen.

"Father, dear father, it is but one who is false—see, look how many of your children are true to you—think on us who are with you here, and will go with you to death without shrinking."

"He is but a child, too, father, and they have stolen away his reason from him," said another.

"Yes, they have brought him to this by suffering," cried a third, as with a clenched hand he menaced the bench where sat the judges.

"Order in the court," cried the president, but the command was

reiterated again and again before silence could be obtained; and when again I could observe the proceedings, I saw the procureur-général addressing the tribunal, to demand a postponement, in consequence of the illness of the last witness, whose testimony was pronounced all conclusive.

A discussion took place on the subject between the counsel for the prisoners and the prosecution, and at length it was ruled that this trial should not be proceeded with till the following morning.

"We are, however, prepared to go on with the other cases," said the procureur, "if the court will permit."

"Certainly," said the president.

"In that case," continued the procureur, "we shall call on the accused Thomas Burke, lieutenant of the *huitième* hussars, now present." For some minutes nothing more could be heard, for the crowded galleries, thronged with expectant hundreds, began now to empty. Mine was a name without interest for any; and the thronged masses rose to depart, while their over-excited minds found vent in words which drowned all else. It was in vain silence and order were proclaimed—the proceedings had lost all interest, and with it all respect, and for full ten minutes the uproar lasted. Meanwhile M. Baillot taking his place at my side, produced some most voluminous papers, in which he soon became deeply engaged. I turned one look throughout the now almost deserted seats, but not one face there was known to me. The few who remained seemed to stay rather from indolence than any other motive, as they lounged over the vacant benches, and yawned listlessly; and much as I dreaded the gaze of that appalling multitude, I sickened at the miserable isolation of my lot, and felt overwhelmed to think that for me there was not one who should pity or regret my fall. At last order was established in the court, and the procureur opened the proceeding by reciting the act of my accusation, in which all the circumstances already mentioned by my advocate were dwelt and commented on with the habitual force and exaggeration of bar oratory. The address was short, however, scarcely fifteen minutes long; and by the tone of the speaker, and the manner of the judges, I guessed that my case excited little or no interest to the prosecution, either from my own humble and insignificant position, or the certainty they felt of my conviction.

My advocate rose to demand a delay, even a short one, pleading most energetically against the precipitancy of a proceeding in which the indictment was but made known the day previous. The president interrupted him roughly, and with an assurance that no circumstance short of the necessity to produce some important evidence not then forthcoming, would induce him to grant a postponement.

M. Baillot replied at once—"Such, sir, is our case—a witness, whose evidence is of the highest moment, is not to be found—a day or two might enable us to obtain his testimony—it is upon this we ground our hope, our certainty of an acquittal. The court will not, I am certain, refuse its clemency in such an emergency as this?"

"Where is this same witness to be found—is he in Paris—is he in France?"

"We hope in Paris, monsieur le president."

"And his name?"

"The Abbé D'Ervan."

A strange murmur ran along the bench of judges at the words, and I could see that some of them smiled in spite of their efforts to seem grave, while the procureur-général did not scruple to laugh outright.

"I believe, sir," said he, addressing the president, "that I can accommodate my learned brother with this so-much-desired testimony perhaps more speedily—I will not say than he wishes—but than he expects."

"How is this?" said my advocate, in a whisper to me—"they have this abbé then—has he turned against his party?"

"I know nothing of him," said I, recklessly: "falsehood and treachery seem so rife here, that it can well be as you say."

"The Abbé D'Ervan," called a loud voice, and with the words the well-known figure moved rapidly from the crowd and mounted the steps of the platform.

"You are lost," said Baillot, in a low, solemn voice. "It is Mehée de La Touche himself."

Had the words of my sentence rung in my ears I had not felt them more; that name by some secret spell had such terror in it.

"You know the prisoner before you, sir," said the president, turning towards the abbé?

Before he could reply my advocate broke in.

"Pardon me, sir, but previous to the examination of this respectable witness I would ask under what name he is to figure in this process? Is he here the Abbé D'Ervan—the agreeable and gifted frequenter of the Faubourg St. Germain? is he the Chevalier Mauprét—the companion and associate of the house of Bourbon? or is he the no less celebrated and esteemed citizen Mehée de La Touche, whose active exertions have been of such value in these eventful times, that we should think no recompense sufficient for them, had he not been paid by both parties. Yes, sir," continued he in an altered tone, "I repeat it, we are prepared to show that this man is unworthy of all credit—that he, whose testimony the court now calls, is a hired spy, a bribed calumniator—the instigator to the treason he prosecutes—the designer of the schemes for which other men's blood has paid the penalty. Is this abbé without and gendarme within to be at large in the world, ensnaring the unsuspecting youth of France by subtle and insidious doctrines disguised under the semblance of after-dinner gaiety? Are we to feel that on such evidence as this, the fame, the honour, the life of every man is to rest? He who earns his livelihood by treason, and whose wealth is gathered in the bloody sawdust beneath the guillotine!"

"We shall not hear these observations longer," said the president, with an accent of severity. "You may comment on the evidence of the witness hereafter, and, if you are able to do so, disprove it. His character is under the protection of the court."

"No, sir," said the advocate, with energy; "no court however high—no tribunal, beneath that of heaven itself—whose decrees we dare not question—can throw a shield over a man like this. There are crimes which stain the nation they occur in—which, happening in our age, make men sorry for their generation, and wish that they had lived in other times."

"Once more, sir, I command you to desist," interrupted the president.

"If I dare to dictate to the honourable court," said the so-called abbé, in an accent of the most honied sweetness, and with a smile of the most winning expression—"I would ask permission for the learned gentleman to proceed. These well-arranged paragraphs—this indignation got by heart, must have vent, since they're paid for; and it would save the tribunal the time which must be consumed in listening to them hereafter."

"If," said the advocate, "the coolness and indifference to blood which the headsman exhibits, be a proof of guilt in the victim before him, I could congratulate the prosecution on their witness. But," cried he, in an accent of wild excitement, "great heavens! are we again fallen on such times as to need atrocity like this. Is the terrible ordeal of blood, through which we have passed to be renewed once more? Is the accusation to be hoarded—the calumnious evidence secreted—the charge held back—till the scaffold is ready—and then the indictment, the slander, the sentence, and the death to follow on one another like the flash and the thunder? Is the very imputation of having heard from a Bourbon, to bear its prestige of sudden death?"

"Silence, sir," cried the president, to whom the allusion to the Duc D'Enghein was peculiarly offensive, and who saw in the looks of the spectators with what force it told. "You know the prisoner?" said he, turning towards D'Ervan.

"I have that honour, sir," said he, with a bland smile.

"State to the court the place and the occasion of your first meeting him."

"If I remember correctly, it was in the Palais Royale, at Beauvilliers. There was a meeting of some of the Chouan party arranged for that evening, but from some accident only three or four were present. The sous-lieutenant, however, was one."

"Repeat, as far as your memory serves you, the conduct and conversation of the prisoner during the evening in question?"

In reply the abbé recapitulated every minute particular of the supper; scarcely an observation the most trivial he did not recall and apply, by some infernal ingenuity, to the scheme of the conspiracy. Athough, never even in the slightest instance falsifying any speech, he tortured the few words I did say into such a semblance of criminality, that I started, as I heard the interpretation which now appeared so naturally to attach to them.

During all this time my advocate never interrupted him once, but occupied himself in writing as rapidly as he could follow the evidence,

The chance expression which concluded the evening, the hope of meeting soon, was artfully construed into an arranged and recognised agreement that I had accepted companionship amongst them, and formally joined their ranks. From this he passed on to the second charge, respecting the conversation I had overheard at the Tuileries, and which I so unhappily repeated to Beauvais. This the abbé dwelt upon with great minuteness, as evidencing my being an accomplice, showing how I had exhibited great zeal in the new cause I had embarked in, and affecting to mark how very highly the service was rated by those in whose power lay the rewards of such an achievement.

Then followed the account of my appointment at Versailles, in which I heard, with a sinking heart, how thoroughly even there the toils were spread around me. It appeared, that the reason of the neglect I then experienced, was an order from the minister that I should not be noticed in any way; that the object of my being placed there was to test my fidelity, which already was suspected; that it was supposed such neglect might naturally have the effect of throwing me more willingly into the views of the conspirators, and, as I was watched in every minute particular, of establishing my own guilt and leading to the detection of others. Then came a narrative of his visits to my quarters, in which the omission of all mention of his name in my report was clearly shown as an evidence of my conscious culpability; and to my horror and confusion a new witness was produced, the sentinel Pierre Dulong, who mounted guard at the gate of the chateau on the morning when I passed the abbé through the park.

With an accuracy beyond my belief he repeated all our conversations, making the dubious hints and dark suggestions which he himself threw out as much mine as his own; and having at length given a full picture of my treacherous conduct, he introduced my intimacy with Beauvais as the crowning circumstance of my guilt. "I shall pause here," said he, with a cool malignity, but ill concealed beneath a look of affected sorrow—"I shall pause here, and, with the permission of the court, allow the accused to make, if he will, a full confession of his criminality; or, if he refuse this, I shall proceed to the disclosure of other circumstances, by which it will be seen that these dark designs met favour and countenance in higher quarters, and among those, too, whose sex, if nothing else, should have removed them beyond the contamination of confederacy with assassination."

"The court," said the president, sternly, "will enter into no compromise of this kind. You are here to give such evidence as you possess—fully, frankly, and without reserve; nor can we permit you to hold out any promises to the prisoner that his confession of guilt can afford a screen to the culpability of others."

"I demand," cried the procureur-général, "a full disclosure from the witness of every thing he knows concerning this conspiracy."

"In that case I shall speak," said the abbé.

At this instant a noise was heard in the hall without; a half murmur ran through the court; and suddenly the heavy curtain was drawn aside, and a loud voice called out—

"In the name of the republic—one and indivisible—an order of council."

The messenger, splashed and covered with mud, advanced through the court, and delivered a packet into the hands of the president, who, having broken the large seals, proceeded leisurely to read it over. At the same moment I felt my arm gently touched, and a small pencil note was slipped into my hand. It ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR—Burke is safe. An order for his transmission before a military tribunal has just been signed by the first consul. Stop all the evidence at once, as he is no longer before the court. The court-martial will be but a formality, and in a few days he will be at liberty.—Yours,

"D'AUVERGNE,
"Lieutenant-General."

Before I could recover the shock of such glad tidings the president rose, and said—

"In the matter of the accused Burke this court has no longer cognizance, as he is summoned before the tribunal of the army. Let him withdraw, and call on the next case—Auguste Leconisset."

D'Ervan stooped down and whispered a few words to the procureur-général, who immediately demanded to peruse the order of council. To this my advocate at once objected, and a short and animated discussion on the legal question followed. The president, however, ruled in favour of my defender; and at the same instant a corporal's guard appeared, into whose charge I was formally handed over, and marched from the court.

Such was the excited state of my mind—in such a confused whirl were all my faculties, that I knew nothing of what was passing around me; and save that I was ordered to mount into a carriage, and driven along at a rapid pace, I remembered no more. At length we reached the quay Voltaire, and entered the large square of the barrack. The tears burst out and ran down my cheeks, as I looked once more on the emblems of the career I loved. We stopped at the door of a large stone building, where two sentries were posted; and the moment after I found myself the occupant of a small barrack-room, in which, though under arrest, no feature of harsh confinement appeared, and from whose windows I could survey the movement of the troops in the court, and hear the sounds which for so many a day had been the most welcome to my existence.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"THE CUIRASSIER."

ALTHOUGH my arrest was continued with all its strictness, I never heard one word of my transmission before the military tribunal; and a fortnight elapsed, during which I passed through every stage of expectancy, doubt, and at last indifference; no tidings having ever reached me as to what fortune lay in store for me.

The gruff old invalid that carried my daily rations seemed but ill-disposed to afford me any information, even as to the common events without, and seldom made any other reply to my questioning than an erect position as if on parade, a military salute, and "*Connais pas, mon lieutenant*"—a phrase which I actually began to abhor from its repetition. Still his daily visits showed I was not utterly forgotten; while from my window I had a view of all that went on in the barrack yard. There—for I had neither books nor newspapers—I spent my entire day watching the evolutions of the soldiers: the parade at daybreak, the relieving guards, the drill, the exercise, the very labours of the barrack square—all had their interest for me, and at length I began to know the very faces of the soldiers, and could recognise the bronzed and weather-beaten features of the veterans of the republican armies.

It was a cuirassier regiment, and one that had seen much service: most of the *sous officiers* and many of the men were decorated; and their helmets bore the haughty device of "*Dix contre un!*" in memory of some battle against the Austrians, where they repulsed and overthrew a force of ten times their own number.

At first their heavy equipments and huge unwieldy horses seemed strange and uncouth to my eyes, accustomed to the more elegant and trim style of a hussar corps, but gradually I fancied there was something almost more soldierlike about them; their dark faces harmonised too with the great black cuirass; and the large massive boot mounting to the middle of the thigh, the long horse-haired helmet, the straight sword, and peculiar, heavy, plodding step, reminded me of what I used to read of the Roman centurion; while the horses, covered with weighty and massive trappings, moved with a warlike bearing, and a tramp as stately as their riders.

When evening came, and set the soldiers free from duty, I used to watch them for hours long, as they sat in little groups and knots about the barrack yard, smoking and chatting—occasionally singing too. Even then, however, their distinctive character was preserved: unlike the noisy, boisterous merriment of the hussar, the staid cuirassier deemed such levity unbecoming the dignity of his arm of the service, and there reigned a half solemn feature over all their intercourse, which struck

me forcibly. I knew not then—as I have learned full well since—how every department of the French army had its distinctive characteristic, and that Napoleon studied and even encouraged the growth of these singular manners to a great extent; doubtless, too, feeling a pride in his own thorough intimacy with their most minute traits, and that facility with which, by a single word, he could address himself to the cherished feeling of a particular corps. And the tact by which the monarch wins over and fascinates the nobles of his court, was here exercised in the great world of a camp, and with far more success too: a phrase, a name, some well-known battle, the date of a victory, would fall from his lips as he rode along the line, and be caught up with enthusiasm by thousands, who felt in the one word a recognition of past services. "Thou"—he always addressed the soldiers in the second person—"thou wert with me at Cairo;" "I remember thee at Arcola," were enough to reward wounds, suffering, mutilation itself; and he to whom such was addressed became an object of veneration among his fellows.

Certain corps preserved more studiously than others the memories of past achievements—the heir-looms of their glory; and to these Bonaparte always spoke with a feeling of friendship most captivating to the soldier's heart, and from them he selected the various regiments that composed his "guard." The cuirassiers belonged to this proud force; and even an unmilitary eye could mark, in their haughty bearing and assured look, that they were a favoured corps.

Among those with whose faces I had now grown familiar there was one whom I regarded with unusual interest: he seemed to me the very type of his class. He was a man of gigantic size, towering by half a head above the very tallest of his fellows, while his enormous breadth of chest and shoulder actually seemed to detract from his great height. The lower part of his face was entirely concealed by a beard of bright red hair that fell in a huge mass over the breast of his cuirass, and seemed by its trim and fashion to be an object of no common pride to the wearer; his nose was marked by a sabre cut that extended across one entire cheek, leaving a deep blue welt in its track: but saving these traits—wild and savage enough—the countenance was singularly mild and pleasing; he had large and liquid blue eyes, soft and lustrous as any girl's; the lashes, too, were long and falling; and his forehead, which was high and open, was white as snow. I was not long in remarking the strange influence this man seemed to possess over the rest—an ascendancy not in any way attributable to the mark on his sleeve, which proclaimed him a corporal. It seemed as though his slightest word, his least gesture, was attended to; and though evidently taciturn and quiet, when he spoke I could detect in his manner an air of promptitude and command that marked him as one born to be above his fellows. If he seemed such in the idle hours, on parade he was the *beau ideal* of a cuirassier. His great war-horse, seemingly small for the immense proportions of the heavy rider, bounded with each movement of his wrist, as if instinct with the horseman's wishes.

I waited with some impatience for the invalid's arrival, to ask who this remarkable soldier was, certain that I should hear of no common man. He came soon after; and as I pointed out the object of my curiosity, the old fellow drew himself up with pride, and, while a grim effort at a smile crossed his features, replied—

"That's Pioche—*Le gros Pioche!*"

"Pioche!" said I, repeating the name aloud, and endeavouring to remember why it seemed well known to me.

"Yes, Pioche," rejoined he, gruffly. "If monsieur had ever been in Egypt, the name would scarcely sound so strange in his ears." And with this sarcasm he hobbled from the room and closed the door, while I could hear him grumbling along the entire corridor, in evident anger at the ignorance that did not know "Pioche."

Twenty times did I repeat the name aloud, before it flashed across me as the same Madame Lefebvre mentioned at the *soirée* in the palace. It was Pioche who shouldered the brass field-piece, and passed before the general on parade. The gigantic size, the powerful strength, the strange name—all could belong to no other; and I felt as though at once I had found an old acquaintance in the great cuirassier of the guard.

If the prisoner in his lonely cell has few incidents to charm his solitary hours, in return he is enabled by some happy gift to make these the sources of many thoughts. The gleam of light that falls upon the floor, broken by the iron gratings of his window, comes laden with storied fancies of other lands—of far distant countries, where men are dwelling in their native mountains free and happy; forgetful of his prison, the captive wanders in his fancy through valleys he has seen in boyhood, and with friends to be met no more. He turns gladly to the past, of whose pleasures no adverse fortune can deprive him, and lives over again the happy hours of his youth; and thinks, with a melancholy not devoid of its own pleasure, of what *they* would feel who loved him, could they but see him now: he pictures *their* sympathy and *their* sorrow, and his heart feels lighter, though his eyes drop tears.

In this way the great cuirassier became an object for my thoughts by day and my dreams by night. I fancied a hundred stories, of which he was the hero; and these imaginings served to while away many a tedious hour, and gave me an interest in watching the little spot of earth that was visible from my barred window. It was in one of these reveries I sat one evening when I heard the sounds of feet approaching along the corridor that led to my room; the clank of a sabre and the jingle of spurs sounded not like my gruff visitor. My door was opened before I had time for much conjecture, and General D'Auvergne stood before me.

"Ah! *mon lieutenant*," cried he, gaily, "you have been thinking very hardly of me since we met last, I'm sure; charging me with forgetfulness, and accusing me of great neglect."

"Pardon me, general," said I, hurriedly; "your former kindness, for which I never can be grateful enough, has been always before my mind. I have not yet forgotten that you saved my life; more still—you rescued my name from dishonour."

"Well well; that's all past and gone now: your reputation stands clear at last. Beauvais has surrendered himself to the authorities at Rouen, and made a full confession of every thing, exculpating you completely in every particular, save the indiscretion of your intercourse with Mehée de La Touche—or, as you know him better, the Abbé D'Ervan."

"And poor Beauvais, what is to become of him?" said I eagerly.

"Have no fears on his account," said he, with something like confusion in his manner; "she—that is, Madame Bonaparte has kindly interested herself in his behalf, and he is to sail for Guadaloupe in a few days—his own proposition and wish."

"And does General Bonaparte know now that I was guiltless?" cried I, with enthusiasm.

"My dear young man," said he, with a bland smile, "I very much fear that the general has little time at this moment to give the matter much of his attention. Great events have happened—are happening while we speak: war is threatening on the side of Austria. Yes, it is true; the camp of Boulogne has received orders to break up; troops are once more on their march to the Rhine; all France is arming."

"Oh, when shall I be free?"

"You are free!" cried he, clapping me gaily on the shoulder: "an amnesty against all untried prisoners for state offences has been proclaimed. At such a moment of national joy——"

"What do you mean?"

"What! and have I not told you my great news? The senate have presented to Bonaparte an address, praying his acceptance of the throne of France—or, in their very words, to make his authority eternal."

"And he?" said I, breathless with impatience to know the result.

"He," continued the general, "has replied as became him, desiring them to state clearly their views — by what steps they propose to consolidate the acquired liberties of the nation; and while avowing that no higher honour or dignity can await him than such as he has already received at the hands of the people—'yet,' added he, 'when the hour arrives that I can see such to be the will of France, when one voice proclaims it from Alsace to the ocean—from Lisle to the Pyrenees, then shall I be ready to accept the crown of France.'"

The general entered minutely into all the circumstances of the great political change, and detailed the effect which the late conspiracy had had on the minds of the people, and with what terror they contemplated the social disorders that must accrue from the death of their great ruler; how nothing short of a government based on a monarchy, with the right of succession established, could withstand such a terrific crisis. As he spoke, the words I had heard in the Temple crossed my mind, and I remembered that such was the anticipation of the prisoners, as they said among themselves—"When the guillotine has done its work, they'll patch up the timbers into a throne.

"And George Cadoudal and the others?" said I.

"They are no more. Betrayed by their own party, they met death like brave men, and as worthy of a better cause. But let us not turn to

so sad a theme. The order for your liberation will be here to-morrow; and as I am appointed to a brigade on active service, I have come to offer you the post of aide-de-camp."

I could not speak; my heart was too full for words. I knew how great the risk of showing any favour to one who stood in such a position as I did, and I could but look my gratitude, while the tears ran down my cheeks.

"Well," cried he, as he took my hand in his, "so much is settled. Now to another point, and one in which my frankness must cause you no offence. You are not rich—neither am I; but Bonaparte always gives us opportunities to gather our epaulettes—ay, and find the bullion to make them too. Meanwhile you may want money——"

"No, general," cried I eagerly; "here are three thousand francs some kind friend sent me. I know not whence they came; and even if I wanted, did not dare to spend them; but now——"

The old man paused, and appeared confused, while he leaned his finger on his forehead, and seemed endeavouring to recall some passing thought.

"Did they come from you, sir?" said I, timidly.

"No, not from me," repeated he slowly. "You say you never found out the donor?"

"Never," said I, while a sense of shame prevented my adding what rose to my mind—could they not be from Mademoiselle de Meudon?

"Well, well," said he, at length, "be it so. And now till to-morrow: I shall be here at noon, and bring the minister's order with me. And so, good-bye."

"Good-bye," said I, as I stood overcome with happiness. "Let what will come of it, this is a moment worth living for."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MORNING AT "THE TUILERIES."

TRUE to his appointment, the general appeared the following day as the hour of noon was striking. He brought the official papers from the minister of war, as well as the formal letter naming me his aide-de-camp. The documents were all perfectly regular, and being read over by the military commission, I was sent for, when my sword was restored to me by the colonel of the regiment in garrison, and I was free once more.

"You have received a severe lesson, Burke," said the general, as he took my arm to lead me towards his carriage, "and all owing to the rashness with which, in times of difficulty and danger, you permitted yourself to form intimacies with men utterly unknown to you. There are epochs when weakness is the worst of evils. You are very young, to be sure, and I trust the experience you have acquired here will serve for a life-time."

"Still, sir, in all this sad business my faith never wavered; my attachment to the consul was unshaken."

"Had it been otherwise, do you think you had been here now?" said he, drily. "Were not the evidences of your fidelity set off against your folly, what chance of escape remained for you? No, no; she who befriended you so steadily throughout this tangled scheme for your ruin, had never advocated your cause were there reason to suppose you were involved in the conspiracy against her husband's life."

"Who do you mean?" said I. "I scarcely understand."

"The consulesse, of course. But for Madame Bonaparte you were lost: even since I saw you last, I have learned how deeply interested she became in your fortunes. The letter you received in the Temple came from her, and the enclosure also. And now, with your leave, we can do nothing better than pay our respects to her, and make our acknowledgments for such kindness. She receives at this hour, and will, I know, take your visit in good part."

While I professed my readiness to comply with the suggestion, we drove into the court of the Tuileries. It was so early that, except the officers of the consul's staff, and some of those on guard, we were the only persons visible.

"We are the first arrivals," said the general, as we drew up at the door of the pavilion. "I am not sorry for it; we shall have our audience over before the crowd assembles."

Giving our names to the usher, we mounted the stairs, and passed on from room to room until we came to a large *salon*, in which seats were formally arranged in a semicircle, an arm-chair somewhat higher than the rest occupying the centre. Several full-length portraits of

the generals of the revolutionary armies adorned the walls, and a striking likeness of the consul himself on horseback held the principal place. I had but time to see thus much, when the two sides of the folding-doors were flung open, and Madame Bonaparte, followed by Mademoiselle de Meudon, entered. Scarcely were the doors closed when she said, smiling—

"I heard of your arrival, general, and guessed its purport, so came at once. Monsieur Burke, I am happy to see you at liberty once more."

"That I owe it to you, madame, makes it doubly dear to me," said I, faltering.

"You must not overrate my exertions on your behalf," replied the consulesse in a hurried voice. "There was an *amende* due to you for the treatment you met with at Versailles—all Savary's fault; and now I am sincerely sorry I ever suffered myself to become a party to his schemes. Indeed I never guessed them, or I should not. General D'Auvergne has made you his aide-de-camp, he tells me."

"Yes, madame; my good fortune has showered favours on me most suddenly. Your kindness has been an augury of success in every thing."

She smiled, as if pleased, and then said—"I have a piece of advice to give you, and hope you'll profit by it." Then turning towards the general, who all this time was deeply engaged in talking to Mademoiselle de Meudon, she added—

"Don't you think, general, that it were as well Monsieur Burke should not be in the way of meeting the consul for some short time to come. Is there any garrison duty, or any service away from Paris, where for a week or so he could remain?"

"I have thought of that, madame," said the general. "Two of the regiments in my brigade are to march to-morrow for the east of France, and I intend my young friend to proceed to Strasbourg at once."

"This is not meant for banishment," said she to me, with a look of much sweetness; "but Bonaparte will now and then say a severe thing, likely to dwell in the mind of him to whom it was addressed long after the sentiment which dictated it has departed. A little time will efface all memory of this sad affair, and then we shall be happy to see you here again."

"Or events may happen soon, madame, by which he may make his own peace with General Bonaparte."

"True, very true," said she, gravely. "And as to that, general, what advices are there from Vienna?"

She drew the general aside into one of the windows, leaving me alone with Mademoiselle de Meudon. But a minute before, and I had given the world for such an opportunity, and now I could not speak a syllable. She, too, seemed equally confused, and bent over a large vase of moss roses, as if totally occupied by their arrangement. I drew nearer, and endeavoured to address her, but the words would not come, while a hundred gushing thoughts pressed on me, and my heart beat

loud enough for me to hear it. At last I saw her lips move, and thought I heard my name; I bent down my head lower; it was her voice, but so low as to be scarcely audible.

"I cannot thank you, sir, as I could wish," said she, "for the service you rendered me, at the risk of your own life and honour. And though I knew not the dangers you were to incur by my request, I asked it as of the only one I knew who would brave such danger at my asking." She paused for a second, then continued—"The friend of Charles could not but be the friend of Marie de Meudon. There is now another favour I would beg at your hands," said she, while a livid paleness overspread her features.

"Oh, name it!" said I, passionately. "Say, how can I serve you?"

"It is this," said she, with an accent whose solemnity sank into the very recesses of my heart. "We have ever been an unlucky race. De Meudon is but a name for misfortune: not only have we met little else in our own lives, but all who have befriended us have paid the penalty of their friendship. My dear brother knew this well; and I——" She paused, and then, though her lips moved, the words that followed were inaudible. "There is but one on earth," continued she, as her eyes, brimful of tears, were turned towards Madame Bonaparte, who still stood talking in the window, "over whose fortunes my affection has thrown no blight. Heaven grant it may be ever so!" Then suddenly, as if remembering herself, she added—"What I would ask is this—that we should meet no more. Nay, nay, look not so harshly at me. If I, alone in the world, ask to be deprived of his friendship who loved my brother so——"

"Oh, if you be alone in the world, feel for one like me, who has not even a country he can call his own? Take not the one hope from my heart, I ask you. Leave me the thought that there is one—but one in all this land, to whom my name, if ever mentioned with praise, can bring one moment's pleasure; who can say, I knew him. Do not forget that Charles, with his dying breath, said you would be my sister."

The door of the *salon* opened suddenly, and a name was announced, but in my confusion I heard not what. Madame Bonaparte, however, advanced towards the new arrival with an air of welcome, as she said—

"We were just wishing for you, general. Pray tell us all the news of Paris?"

The person thus addressed was a very tall and singularly handsome man, whose dark eyes and dark whiskers, meeting in the middle of his chin, gave him the appearance of an Italian. He was dressed in a hussar uniform, whose gorgeous braiding of gold was heightened in effect by a blaze of orders and stars that covered the entire breast; the scarlet pantaloons, tight to the leg, displayed to advantage the perfect symmetry of his form; while his boots of yellow morocco, bound and tasselled with gold, seemed the very coquetry of military costume: a sabre, the hilt actually covered with precious stones, clanked at his side, and the *aigrette* of his plumed hat was a large diamond. There was something almost theatrical in the manner of his approach, as with

a stately step and a deep bow he took Madame Bonaparte's hand and kissed it; a ceremony he repeated to Mademoiselle de Meudon, adding as he did so—

"And my fair *Rose de Provence*—more beautiful than ever! how is she?"

"What flattery is he whispering, Marie?" said the consulesse, laughing. "Don't you know, general, that I insist on all the compliments here being paid to myself. What do you think of my robe? your judgment is said to be perfect?"

"Charming — absolutely charming!" said he, in an attitude of affected admiration. "It is only such taste as yours could have devised any thing so beautiful. Yet the roses—I half think I should have preferred them white."

"You can scarcely imagine that vain fellow, with the long ringlets, the boldest soldier of the French army," said the general in a low whisper, as he drew me to one side.

"Indeed! and who is he then?"

"You a hussar, and not know him! Why, Murat, to be sure."

"So then, madame, all my news of Monsieur Talleyrand's ball, it seems, is stale already. You've heard that the Russian and Austrian ministers both sent apologies?"

"Oh, dear!" said she, sighing, "have I not heard it a thousand times, and every reason for it canvassed, until I wished both of their excellencies at—at Madame Lefebvre's dinner party."

"That was perfect," cried Murat aloud; "a regular bivouac in a *salon*. You'd think that the silver dishes and the gilt candelabras had just been captured from the enemy, and that the *cuisine* was made by beat of drum."

"The general is an honest man and a brave officer," said D'Auvergne, somewhat nettled at the tone Murat spoke in.

"No small boast, either," replied the other, shrugging his shoulders carelessly, "in the times and the land we live in."

"And what of Cambaceres' *soirée?* how did it go off?" interposed Madame Bonaparte, anxious to relieve the awkward pause that followed.

"Like every thing in his hotel—sombre, stately, and stupid; the company all dull, who would be agreeable every where else; the tone of the reception laboured and affected; and every one dying to get away to Fouché's. It was his second night for receiving."

"Was that pleasanter then?"

"A hundred times. There are no parties like his: one meets every body. It is a kind of neutral territory for the Faubourg and the Jacobin—the partizan of our people, and the followers of heaven knows who. Fouché slips about, whispering the same anecdote in confidence to every one, and binding each to secrecy. Then, as every one comes there to spy his neighbour, the host has an excellent opportunity of pumping all in turn; and while they all persist in telling him nothing but lies, they forget that with him no readier road could lead to the detection of truth."

"The consul!" said a servant aloud, as the door opened and closed with a crash, and Bonaparte, dressed in the uniform of the chasseurs of the guard, and covered with dust, entered.

"Was Decrés here?" and then, without waiting for a reply, continued—"It is settled—all finally arranged; I told you, madame, the 'pear was ripe.' I start to-morrow for Boulogne. You, Murat, must accompany me—D'Auvergne, your division will march the day after. Who is this gentleman?"

This latter question, in all its abruptness, was addressed to me, while a dark and ominous frown settled on his features.

"My aide-de-camp, sir," said the old general hastily, hoping thus to escape further inquiry.

"Your name, sir?" said the consul harshly, as he fixed his piercing eyes upon me.

"Burke, sir; *sous lieutenant*——"

"Of the eighth hussars," continued he. "I know the rest, sir. Every conspiracy is made up of knaves and fools: you figured in the latter capacity. Mark me, sir; your name is yet to make—the time is approaching when you may have the opportunity: still, General D'Auvergne, it is not in the ranks of a Chouan plot I should have gone to select my staff."

"Pardon me, sir; but this young man's devotion to you——"

"Is on record, general; I have seen it in Mehée de La Touche's own writing," added Bonaparte, with a sneer. "Give me the fidelity, sir, that has no tarnish—like your own, D'Auvergne. Go, sir," said he, turning to me, while he waved his hand towards the door. "It will need all your bravery and all your heroism to make me acquit General D'Auvergne of an act of folly."

I hung my head in shame, and with a low reverence and a tottering step moved from the room and closed the door behind me.

I had just reached the street when the general overtook me.

"Come, come, Burke," said he, "you must not mind this. I heard Lannes receive a heavier reproof, because he only carried away three guns of an Austrian battery, when there were four in all."

"Bonaparte never forgets, sir," muttered I between my teeth, as the well-remembered phrase crossed my mind.

"Then there's but one thing to do, my boy; give him a pleasanter *souvenir* to look back upon. Besides," added he in a lower tone, "the general is ever harsh at the moment of victory; and such is the present. In a few days more France will have an Emperor: the senate has declared, and the army wait but for the signal to salute their monarch. And now for your own duties. Make your arrangements to start to-night by post for Mayence: I shall join you there in about ten days. You are, on your arrival, to report yourself to the general in command, and receive your instructions from him. A great movement towards the Rhine is in contemplation, but of course every thing awaits the course of political changes in Paris."

Thus conversing, we reached the corner of the Rue de Rohan, where the general's quarters were.

"You'll be here then punctually at eight to-night," said he, and we parted.

I walked on for some time without knowing which way I went, the strange conflict of my mind so completely absorbed me—hope and fear, pride, shame, and sorrow alternately swaying me with their impulses—I noticed not the gay and splendid streets through which I passed, nor the merry groups which poured along. At length I remembered that but a few hours remained for me to make some purchases necessary for my journey. My new uniform as aide-de-camp too was yet to be ordered; and by some strange hazard I was exactly at the corner of the Rue de Richelieu on the Bouvelard, at the very shop of Monsieur Crillac, where, some months before, began the singular current of ill luck that had followed me ever since. A half shudder of fear passed across me for a second as I thought of all the dangers I had gone through, and the next moment I felt ashamed of my cowardice, and pushing the glass door before me, walked in. I looked about me for the well-known face of the proprietor, but he was no where to be seen. A lean and wasted little old man, hung round with tapes and measures, was the only person there. Saluting me with a most respectful bow, he asked my orders.

"I thought this was Crillac's," said I, hesitatingly.

A shrug of the shoulders and a strange expression of the eyebrows was the only reply.

"I remember he lived here some eight or ten months ago," said I again, curious to find out the meaning of the man's ignorance of his predecessor.

"Monsieur has been away from Paris for some time then?" was the cautious question of the little man, as he peered curiously at me.

"Yes; I have been away," said I, after a pause.

"Monsieur knew Crillac probably when he was here?"

"I never saw him but once," said I.

"Ha!" cried he, after a long silence. "Then you probably never heard of the Chouan conspiracy to murder the chief consul and overthrow the government, nor of their trial at the Palais de Justice?"

I nodded slightly, and he went on.

"Monsieur Crillac's evidence was of great value in the proceeding: he knew Jules de Polignac and Charles de la Riviere well; and but for him San Victor would have escaped."

"And what has become of him since?"

"He is gone back to the south; he has been promoted."

"Promoted!—what do you mean?"

"*Parbleu!* it is easy enough to understand: he was made *chef de bureau* in the department of——"

"What!—was he not a tailor then?"

"A tailor!—no," said, the little man, laughing heartily; "he was a *mouchard*, a police spy, who knew all the royalist party well at Bourdeaux, and Fouché brought him up here to Paris, and established him in this house. Ah, *mon Dieu!*" said he, sighing, "he had a better and a pleasanter occupation than cutting out pantaloons."

Without heeding the reiterated professions of the little tailor of his desire for my patronage, I strolled out again, lost in reflection, and sick to the heart of a system based on such duplicity and deception.

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At last in Mayence. What a change of life was this to me. A large fortress garrisoned by twelve thousand men, principally artillery, awaited here the orders of the consul; but whither the destination before them, or what the hour when the word to march was to summon them, none could tell. Meanwhile the activity of the troops was studiously kept up; battering trains of field artillery were exercised day after day; the men were practised in all the movements of the field; while the foundries were unceasingly occupied in casting guns, and the furnaces rolled forth their myriads of shell and shot. Staff officers came and went; expresses arrived from Paris, and orderlies, travel-stained and tired, galloped in from the other fortified places near, but still no whisper came to say where the great game of war was to open—for what quarter of the globe the terrible carnage was destined. From daylight till dark no moment of our time was unoccupied; reports innumerable were to be furnished on every possible subject, and frequently it was far in the night ere I returned to rest. To others this unbroken monotony may have been wearisome and uninteresting; to me each incident bore upon the great cause I gloried in—the dull rumble of the caissons, the heavy clattering of the brass guns, were music to my ear, and I never wearied of the din and clamour that spoke of preparation. Such was indeed the pre-occupation of my thoughts, that I scarcely marked the course of events which were even then passing, or the mighty changes that already moved across the destinies of France. To my eyes the conqueror of Lodi needed no title—what sceptre could equal his own sword? France might desire in her pride to unite her destinies with such a name as his, but he—the general of Italy and Egypt—could not be exalted by any dignity. Such were my boyish fancies; and as I indulged them, again there grew up the hope within me that a brighter day was yet to beam on my own fortunes, when I should do that which even in his eyes might seem worthy. His very reproaches stirred my courage and nerved my heart. There was a combat—there was a battle-field before me, in which my whole fame and honour lay; and could I but succeed in making him confess that he had wronged me, what pride was in the thought. Yes, said I again and again, a devotion to him such as I can offer must have success: one who like me has neither home, nor friends, nor country to share his heart, must have room in it for one passion, and that shall be glory. She whom alone I could have loved—I dared not confess I did love her—never could be mine. Life must have its object, and what so noble as that before me My very dreams caught up the infatuation of my waking thoughts—and images of battle, deadly contests, and terrific skirmishes were constantly passing before me; and I actually went my daily rounds of duty buried in these

thoughts, and lost to every thing save what ministered to my excited imagination.

We who lived far away on the distant frontier could but collect from the journals the state of excitement and enthusiasm into which every class of the capital were thrown by Napoleon's elevation to the monarchy. Never, perhaps, in any country did the current of popular favour run in a stream so united. The army hailed him as their brother of the sword, and felt the proud distinction that the chief of the empire was chosen from their ranks. The civilian saw the restoration of monarchy as the pledge of that security which alone was wanting to consolidate national prosperity. The clergy, however they may have distrusted his sincerity, could not but acknowledge that to his influence was owing the return of the ancient faith; and save the Vendéans broken and discomfited, and the scattered remnants of the Jacobin party, discouraged by the fate of Moreau, none raised a voice against him. A few of the old republicans, among whom was Carnot, did, it is true, proclaim their dissent; but so moderately, and with so little of partizan spirit, as to call forth an eulogium on their honourable conduct from Napoleon himself.

The mighty change which was to undo all the long and arduous struggles for liberty, which took years in their accomplishment, was effected in one burst of national enthusiasm. Surrounded by nations on whose friendship they dared not reckon—at war with their most powerful enemy, England, France saw herself dependent on the genius of one great man; and beheld, too, the formidable conspiracy for his assassination, coupled with the schemes against her own independence. He became thus indissolubly linked with her fortunes—self-interest and gratitude pointed both in the same direction to secure his services; and the imperial crown was indeed less the reward of the past, than the price of the future. Even they who loved him least, felt that in his guidance there was safety; and that, without him, the prospect was dark, and dreary, and threatening. Another element which greatly contributed to the same effect, was the social ruin caused by the revolution—the destruction of all commerce—the forfeiture of property had thrown every class into the service of the government. Men gladly advocated a change by which the ancient forms of a monarchy might be restored, and with them the long train of patronage and appointments, their inevitable attendants. Even the old families of the kingdom hailed the return of an order of things which might include them in the favours of the crown; and the question now was, what rank or class should be foremost in tendering their allegiance to the new sovereign. We should hesitate ere we condemn the sudden impulse by which many were driven at this period. Confiscation and exile had done much to break the spirit of even the hardiest; and the very return to the institutions in which all their ancient prejudices were involved, seemed a pledge against the tyranny of the mass.

As for Napoleon himself, each step in his proud career seemed to evoke the spirit necessary to direct it—the resources of his mighty intellect appeared with every new drain on them, only the more

inexhaustible. Animated through his whole life by the one great principle, the aggrandizement of France—his vast intelligence gathering strength with his own increase of power, enabled him to cultivate every element of national greatness, and mould their energies to his will, till at length the nation seemed but one vast body, of which he was the heart, the impulse, that sent the life-blood bounding through all its arteries, and with whose beating pulses every, even the most remote portion throbbed in unison.

The same day that established the empire, declared the rank and dignity accorded to each member of the royal family, with the titles to be borne by the ministers and other high officers of the crown. The next step was the creation of a new order of nobility—one which, without ancient lineage or vast possessions, could still command the respect and admiration of all—the marshals of France. The names of Berthier, Murat, Augureau, Masséna, Bernadotte, Ney, Soult, Lannes, Mortier, Davoust, Bessieres, were enough to throw a blaze of lustre on the order; and had it not been for the omission of Macdonald's name in this glorious list, public enthusiasm had been complete; but then he was the friend of Moreau, and Bonaparte "did not forgive."

The restoration of the old titles, so long in abeyance, the return to the pomp and state of monarchy, seemed like a national *fête*, and Paris became the scene of a splendid festivity and a magnificence unknown for many years past. It was necessary for the new court to make its impression on the world, and the endeavour was made by luxury and splendour, to eclipse the grandeur which in the days of the Bourbons was an heirloom of royalty. To this end functionaries and officers of the palace were appointed in myriads—brilliant and costly uniforms adopted—courtly titles and ceremonial observances increased without end—and etiquette, carried to a pitch of strictness which no former reign had ever exhibited, now regulated every department of the state.

While, however, nothing was too minute or too trivial, provided that it bore even in the remotest way on the re-establishment of that throne he had so long and so ardently desired, Napoleon's great mind was eagerly bent upon the necessity of giving to the empire one of those astounding evidences of his genius, which marked him as above all other men. He wished to show to France that the crown had devolved upon the rightful successor to Charlemagne, and to prove to the army that the purple mantle of royalty could not conceal the spur of the warrior; and thus while all believed him occupied with the ordinary routine of the period, his ambitious thoughts were carrying him away across the Pyrenees, or beyond the Danube, to battle-fields of even greater glory than ever, and to conquests prouder than all his former ones.

The same power of concentrativeness that he so eminently possessed himself, he imparted, as if by magic, to his government. Paris was France. To the capital flocked all whose talent or zeal prompted them to seek for advancement. The emperor was not only the fountain of all honour, but of all emolument and place. No patronage was exercised without his permission, and none was conferred without the convic-

tion that some staunch adherent was secured, whose friendship was ratified, or whose former enmity was conciliated.

Thus passed the year that followed his accession to the throne—that brilliant pageant of a nation's enthusiasm rendering tribute to the majesty of intellect. At length the period of inaction seemed drawing to a close; and a greater activity in the war department, and a new levy of troops, betokened the approach of some more energetic measures. Men whispered that the English expedition was about to sail, and reinforcements of ammunition and artillery were despatched to the coast; when suddenly came the news of Trafalgar: Villaneuve was beaten—his fleet annihilated—the whole combination of events destroyed—and England, again triumphant on the element she had made her own, hurled defiance at the threats of her enemy. The same despatch that brought the intelligence to Mayence told us to be in readiness for a movement, but when or where to none of us could surmise. Still detachments from various corps stationed about were marched into the garrison, skeleton regiments commanded to make up their deficiencies, and a renewed energy was every where perceptible. At last, towards the middle of August, I was sent for by the general in command of the fortress, and informed that General D'Auvergne had been promoted to the command of a cavalry brigade stationed at Coblentz.

"You are to join him there immediately," continued he; "but here is a note from himself, which probably will explain every thing."

And with that he handed me a small sealed letter. It was the first, save on purely regimental matters, I had ever received from him, and somehow I felt unusually anxious about its contents. It ran in these words:—

"My dear B.—His majesty has just sent for me, and, most graciously esteeming me not yet too old to serve him, has given me the command of a brigade—late the 12th, now to be called 'D'Auvergne's Cavalry.' I would willingly have mentioned your name for promotion, to which your zeal and activity would well entitle you, but deemed it better to let your claim come before the emperor's personal notice—which an opportunity will, I trust, soon permit of its doing. His majesty, with a kindness which the devotion of a life could not repay, has also interested himself personally for me in a quarter where only his influence could have proved successful—but the explanation of this I reserve for your arrival. And now request that you will lose no time in repairing to Paris—where I shall expect to see you by Tuesday.—Yours,

"D'Auvergne,
"Lieut.-General."

This strange paragraph puzzled me not a little; nor could I by any exercise of ingenuity find out even a plausible meaning for it. I read it over and over, weighing and canvassing every word, and torturing each syllable—but all to no purpose. Had the general been some youthful but unhappy lover, to forward whose suit the emperor had

lent his influence, then had I understood the allusion, but with the old weather-beaten officer, whose hairs were blanched with years and service, the very thought of such a thing was too absurd. Yet what could be the royal favour so lavishly praised: he needed no intercession with the empress—at least I remembered well how marked the kindness of Josephine was towards him in former times. But to what use guessing! Thoughts by long revolving, often become only the more entangled, and we lose sight of the real difficulty in canvassing our own impressions concerning it. And so from this text did I spin away a hundred fancies that occupied me the whole road to Paris, nor left me till the din and movement of the great capital banished all other reflections.

Arrangement had been made for my reception at the Rue de Rohan, but I learned that the general was at Versailles with the court, and only came up to Paris once or twice each week. His direction to me was, to wait for his arrival, and not to leave the city on any account.

With what a strange feeling did I survey the palace of the Tuileries —the scene of my first moment of delighted admiration of her I now loved—and alas, of my first step in the long catalogue of my misfortunes. I lingered about the gardens with a fascination I could not account for; my destiny seemed somehow linked with the spot, and I could not reason myself out of the notion but that there, in that great pile, the fate of my whole life was to be decided.

My entire day was passed in this way, and evening found me seated on one of the benches near the windows of the pavilion, where I watched the lustres in the long gallery as one by one they burst into light, and saw the gilt candelabras twinkling as each taper was illuminated. It was an evening reception of the emperor, and I could mark the vast assemblage, in every variety of uniform, that filled the *salons*. At length the drums beat for strangers to leave the gardens, the patrols passed on, and gradually the crowded walks became thinner and thinner, the sounds of the drum grew fainter, and finally the whole space became still and noiseless; not a voice was to be heard, not a step moved on the gravel. I knew that the gates were now locked, and yet I staid on, glad to be alone, and at leisure to dream away among the fancies that kept ever rising to my mind, and follow out the trains of thought that ever and anon opened before me.

As the hour grew later, and the *salons* filled more and more, the windows were opened along the terrace to give air, and I could hear the continued murmur of hundreds of voices conversing, while at times the sound of laughter rose above the rest. What a rush of thoughts came on me as I sat; how did I picture to myself the dark intrigues, the subtle plots of wily diplomatists, the bold and daring aspirations of the brave soldiers, the high hopes, and the ambitious yearnings, that were all commingled there—grouped around him whose dreams were of universal empire. While I mused the night glided on, and the solemn sound of the bell of Notre Dame proclaimed midnight. I now could mark that the *salons* were thinning, and the unceasing din of carriages in the "place" announced the departure of the guests. In little

more than half an hour the great gallery was empty, and but a few groups remained in the apartments adjoining; even they soon departed, and then I could see the servants passing from room to room extinguishing the lights, and soon the great facade of the palace was wrapped in darkness: a twinkling light appeared here and there for some time, but it too went out. The night was calm, and still, and sultry; not a leaf stirred, and the heavy tread of the sentinels, as they paced the marble vestibule, was heard plainly where I stood.

How full of thought to me was that vast pile, now shrouded in the gloom of night. What bold ambitious deeds—what dreams of empire had not been conceived there. The great of other days, indeed, entered little into my mind, as I remembered it was the home of him, the greatest of them all. How terrible, too, it was to think, that within that now silent palace, which seemed sleeping with the tranquil quiet of an humble cottage, the dreadful plans which were to convulse the world, to shake thrones and dynasties, to make of Europe a vast battle-field, were now devising. The masses of dark cloud that hung heavily in the air, obscuring the sky, and shutting out every star, seemed to my fevered imagination an augury of evil; and the oppressive, loaded atmosphere, though perfumed with the odour of flowers, sunk heavily on the spirits. Again the hour rung out, and I remembered that the gates of the garden were now closed for the night, and that I should remain where I was till daylight liberated me. My mind was, however, too full of its own thoughts to make me care for sleep, and I strolled along the gloomy walks lost in reverie.

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